

“Wait”
Luke 24:44-53
Ascension Sunday
May 13, 2018 (Mother’s Day)
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Luke 24:44-53 (NRSV)

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah^[a] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses^[b] of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

The Ascension of Jesus

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.^[c] ⁵² And they worshiped him, and^[d] returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³ and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

We’re into the 18th year of the 21st century, and frankly, we don’t hear much about space exploration anymore, but there *was a time* that the U.S. worked on it a lot.

Some of the benefits of the space program are the satellite systems that are in place, orbiting around the Earth.

Some are called “geostationary” because they stay in place (she explained simplistically) in the same orbit and speed as the rotation of the Earth.

We have such a need for constant communication in our lives these days: TV, radio and phone signals, and military communication for national security.

Wouldn’t it be something if a single network (in all the TV packages available) limited itself to a “line of sight” transmission (like the early astronauts had; only able to speak to “Houston” when they were directly over that tower.) This channel would have programming for a 7 mile radius; within that space folks could be tuned in.

Sounds crazy doesn’t it?

But that’s what God was willing to do when he came to live among us as Jesus. As long as Jesus was “in view” he was able to influence the disciples, his friends, those he healed, those he challenged and those he upset. Jesus was tuned in!

And don't you know we all probably have another kind of "geostationary satellite" in our lives!

How do MOMS know the things they know?

She **must** have had eyes in the back of her head?

My brother was her benefactor more than once; I'd have probably beaned him if her words hadn't arrived in time!

//Today we remember the Ascension of Jesus when he was "taken up" (Luke wrote "withdrawn from them.")

And, before he left, Jesus promised the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

A commentator I read said, *"the Ascension is the dividing line between the appearances of the Risen Lord to eye witnesses AND the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church."* (Arnold B. Rhodes)

About 40 days after the Resurrection, Jesus *disappeared* into a cloud.

He left the disciples stunned, maybe even a little anxious.

He'd reminded them to wait, in Jerusalem, when he said, "a power" would be given to them "soon."

God gave US mothers to give us the same kind of admonishments!

"Wait."

"Wait here."

"Never mind *why*. Just do as I tell you."

"And yes, it (whatever IT was) will happen soon."

Mothers are the gentle remind-ers God provides to help us remember about obedience like Jesus exemplified.

Better call and thank my mom again!

The Ascension had to happen so that we could have "ALWAYS ON" contact with God!

As Augustine put it: Jesus *"ascended from before our eyes,only to find [him] in our hearts."*

In today's lectionary epistle reading, writing to the Ephesians, Paul wrote: *"the working of [God's] great might/ which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places"* (Eph. 1:19-20) is VERY REAL FOR US today.

God's accomplishment enables the Spirit of Jesus Christ (who was available in the flesh 2000 years ago) available to you and me TODAY!

For our minds to wrap around it, it's like God is surrounding us, enabling us to communicate ALWAYS, like the geostationary satellites do.

//The disciples had asked, just before Jesus' departure, "Lord, is it time?"

Don't we ask that often on our walks of faith?

Or on the long car rides when Mother had to remind us "not yet."

Maybe God has spoken THOSE words to you as well.

And these days, 18 years into the 21st century, I hear, more often than you'd think, *"oh, if it was only time for Jesus to REAPPEAR!"*

We struggle with the headlines, like the disciples had to struggle, with the politics of the day.

We wonder, like Peter and John and the others, when will God restore the glory of His reign.

But, here's what I'd like us, Chosen and Beloved Ones, to consider as we wait.

We aren't to know God's timing (in answers to our prayers *or* the return of the Messiah) but, like the disciples we can be witnesses to all the things Jesus HAS done!

The Ascension makes Jesus a universal, Creation-encompassing figure.

And while we sit here on Sundays because we ARE drawn to him...And ARE waiting for his return...

Just like the disciples, we must use this time wisely to witness to others who *should* know him!

There's no time to think about it!

Remember how Mom used to tell us to do other things to get our minds off "waiting?"

Well, listen! And you'll hear God's voice telling US it's time to act, now, and "oh, take your brother and sister with you, too!"

Get off the sidelines.

Get out of the box!

Move away from things that separate us – be it politics or legislation or denomination or religion - and find ways to move toward being united IN Christ!

We've been in the season of Eastertide, the days since the resurrection for a long time.

THIS YEAR it's already been 40 days!

Don't you think that's long enough to have reflected on the ascended Lord?

Don't you think that's long enough to have imitated the gospel message we read that he taught in Scripture?

The Good News will not be the same message in every place, to every person, in every context, but....**it will *always* be the Good News that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again.**

As we get ready for Pentecost (it's next Sunday, don't forget to wear red, orange or yellow!)

It's the birthday of our church, the church Jesus asks us to BE //that does the DOING of sharing the Good News.

Think about the universal communication with God that we have through the coming of the Holy Spirit – **that came because** Jesus returned to sit at the right hand of God.

And, regard his departure as empowerment!

Jesus CAME to redeem messes....personal and public!

We have responsibilities to continue his work – but we don't do it alone!

'Cause, we're told in Hebrews, Jesus has gone to be our intercessor before God.

Jesus prays for us...and we'll celebrate next Sunday his sending of the power of the Holy Spirit who guides us in our work.

Do you remember, from the song made popular by Bette Midler in the '90s's called "From a Distance?" The end of the lyrics say, *"God is watching us, God is watching us, God is watching us....from a distance."* Remember?

The allegory of the geostationary satellites being like God surrounding all of us from "out in space" isn't quite accurate for today. 'Cause God is as close as our next breath; the Holy Spirit is within us!

God is watching us – TO BE SURE, but it's not "from a distance."

The Ascension of Jesus closes today's reading (and the other gospels, too) and then story of God's people continues with the birth of the church and the witnessing of disciples for centuries. Remember what Ben read that Luke wrote:

“And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.”

That same rejoicing and witnessing should continue through us.

Keep the modes of communication open, Dear Ones; don't let the power you have in YOU, diminish because the message is so very important.

Now: “don't make me stop this car” – “‘cause you know what's good for you!”

Praise God for the Ascension of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who has gone ahead to sit at the right hand of God the Father **AND has** sent the Holy Spirit to sustain our work with hope and courage!

Amen!